

# Northern Virginia Long-Term Care UPDATE

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## Information and Issues from Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

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### **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Launch Nursing Home Quality Initiative Pilot Program**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) launched a six-state public reporting pilot program in April 2002. The pilot program involves assessing nursing home quality based upon aggregated resident data and relevant measures of service inputs. People generally enter a nursing home for a long-term or temporary stay. Therefore, the aggregated resident data is based on two distinct populations: residents in nursing homes for more than 90 days (chronic or long-term care residents) and residents in facilities for less than 90 days (post acute care residents). CMS will publish the results of the assessments on nursing homes in Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Washington. These states were selected based on criteria which includes past experience or current interest in consumer reporting, a State's legislative mandate to report consumer information, the varied size of the States, both in terms of geography and population, urban and rural populations, the number of nursing homes in the State, the diversity of residents in the State, and the mix of chains and independently owned facilities.

The Nursing Home Quality Initiative is part of a larger U.S. Department of Health and Human Service Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' goal to enhance quality of health care for all Americans, including those covered by

the Medicare and Medicaid programs. The pilot's purpose is to provide meaningful comparative information, such as accepted quality of care criteria, quality and performance measures to consumers to aid them in selecting a nursing home; and to provide Medicare and Medicaid certified nursing homes with information and technical assistance in measuring and improving the care they provide.

The following measures are included for the pilot public reporting effort:

#### **Measures for Chronic Care Residents:**

- Late loss decline in activities of daily living (ADLs), such as bathing, eating, and dressing
- Prevalence of infections
- Unplanned weight loss prevalence
- Inadequate pain management
- Developing and healing pressure ulcer (bed sore) prevalence
- Use of daily physical restraints
- Inappropriate use of anti-psychotics

#### **Measures for Post-Acute Care Residents:**

- Prevalence of symptoms of delirium
- Inadequate pain management

*(See page 2)*

### **Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Staff**

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Ombud\\_main.htm](http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/service/aaa/html/Ombud_main.htm)**

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#### ➤ Improvement in walking

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services indicate that these measures should give consumers another source of information about how well nursing homes are caring for their residents' physical and clinical needs. But they also suggest that it is important to visit nursing homes before making a final choice. The National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (NCCNHR) also recommends that when choosing a nursing home, people contact their local ombudsman's office to learn the complaint record of a particular home and to obtain information regarding the home's most recent health inspection.

*Source: The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. For more information, please visit <http://www.cms.hhs.gov>*

### ***Volunteer Ombudsmen Win Award***

Volunteer Ombudsmen serving in Loudoun County have recently been recognized for their dedication to some of Loudoun's frailest and most vulnerable citizens. On April 15, 2002, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors and Loudoun County Volunteer Services presented them with the "Outstanding Adult Team"

award for 2002. The volunteer team was comprised of Katherine Layton, Kathleen McCuiston and James Wille.

### ***Natural Lighting Offers Health Benefits to Long-term Care Residents***

Natural light can do more than increase residents' ability to see well. Too often, residents have little exposure to natural light (that is, sunlight) which can be beneficial for their health in a number of ways. Beyond helping to synthesize vitamin D through the skin, sunlight also affects the neuroendocrine system. People who are deprived of natural light may suffer from sleep disorders and depression. Inadequate light also has an impact on calcium metabolism, which can contribute to reduced bone mass and osteoporosis.

Alzheimer's disease is sometimes characterized as a rhythmic disorder in which these chemical processes no longer operate properly. Researchers in the field of dementia are studying the relationship of circadian rhythms to bodily function. Some results indicate that conditions that are related to circadian rhythms, such as sleep disorders, seasonal affective disorder and depression, may occur less frequently if residents of long-term care facilities are exposed to adequate natural light. Using bright light may help reset these biological rhythms.

Source: Excerpts from Sherylyn H. Briller, "Enhancing Identity and Sense of Home", In Creating Successful Dementia Care Settings, M. Calkins. Baltimore, MD: Health Professions Press. Reprinted from the Alzheimer's Care Guide, which is published monthly for \$35 per year by Eymann Publications, Inc., 13205 Fellowship Way, Reno, NV 89511.

# Communication Corner

## Agitation in Older Persons with Dementia

An estimated four million older Americans are currently diagnosed with dementia (National Institute on Aging, 1999). The term *dementia* refers to a severed loss of thinking abilities, especially memory. It occurs most often in later years. Some memory loss is normal as we age, but dementia is not. Dementia is always caused by an underlying disease that damages brain tissue, leading to disturbed brain functioning.

Many people with dementia experience emotional distress or behavioral changes best summed up by the term *agitation*. Very mild agitation may seem like a personality change in a person.

Four problems\* that can cause agitation are physical and medical problems, environmental stresses, sleep problems, and psychiatric syndromes. In all these situations, a person with dementia is more easily agitated because the brain has physically changed and no longer functions in a healthy manner.

If a person with dementia has recently become agitated for the first time or has a change from his or her usual behavior, one thing to look for is a medical or physical problem.

Sudden illnesses may weaken the brain, causing worsened agitation. The most common medical problems that can cause agitation are bladder infections, bad colds, bronchitis or pneumonia, pain, and dehydration or poor nutrition. It is also very important to make sure that the person who has become more agitated has not recently had a stroke or been injured in a fall.

Finally, flare-ups of chronic diseases, such as diabetes or diseases of the heart, liver or kidneys can cause agitation, especially if a person with dementia does not take medications consistently or fails to follow a special diet.

A toxic reaction to medication is an important cause of sudden confusion and agitation. Older persons often take many different medications that can interact with each other. It is crucial to find out if side effects of a new prescription, interactions between medications, or taking the wrong dose have led to a bad reaction.

Common physical problems that cause pain, discomfort, worry, or lack of sleep can lead to agitation by making the person upset or fatigued. Examples of such problems include arthritis, sitting all day in an uncomfortable position, constipation, and impaired vision or hearing.

\*Physical and medical problems will be discussed in this issue; please see upcoming issues for discussion of the other causes.

### References

National Institute on Aging. 1999. Progress report on Alzheimer" disease. Silver Spring, MD: NIA.

<http://www.psychguides.com/gahe.html>

*The Communication Corner addresses information on dementia and dementia-related diseases. Please address comments to [ythom1@co.fairfax.va.us](mailto:ythom1@co.fairfax.va.us)*

**The Update is available  
in alternative formats.**



*News...*

**May is Older Americans Month!** In cities, towns, and communities across the United States, older Americans make countless contributions to the life of our Nation. Each year, during the month of May, Americans acknowledge in a special way the contributions of older Americans to our society.

The Ombudsman Program will hold a Pain Management Seminar on Thurs., May 23, 2002 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Fairfax County's Government Center.

The Ombudsman Program will be recruiting volunteer ombudsmen. Volunteer Ombudsmen dedicate four (4) hours per week (during weekdays) and are assigned to a specific long-term care facility. Annual training for this rewarding position will be held September 19, 20, and 26, 2002. An application and interview are required. For further information, please call Nancy Cavicke at **(703) 324-5435**.

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